

About America: Read and Learn



Native Americans

Today 4.3 million people are estimated to be at least in part Native Americans or Indian American. They made up 1.5 percent of the U.S. population. However, as many as 7.9 million Americans claim American Indian ancestry.

The U.S. Government supports Native Americans political, civil, and cultural rights through many government agencies. Since 1824 the Bureau for Indian Affairs (BIA) supports Native American's education, economic development and resources such as land management. Many tribes have begun operating successful business ventures as casinos and hotel chains, providing much needed revenue and

employment. The story of the Native Americans is unique because they were the original inhabitants of the American Continent and experienced hardship as the English colonies of the 17th century settle on their territories. The conflicts between the Native Americans and the white population is similar to other American Indians communities from Alaska to the Patagonia in the South. Their story is inspiring because they survived after their land was taken away in the 19th century and now have been asserted their cultural, political, and economic rights and have succeeded in retaining their identity and culture despite the onslaught of modern civilization.

POW WOW Celebration

Washington, D.C

August



Native American Women dancing at the POW WOW.

Pow Wow is a traditional meeting of the Native American people. Dancing, singing and renewing old friendships.

US Embassy
Managua

Volume 1, Issue 1
November 2005

Names below are Native American:

Alaska
Arkansas
Connecticut
Dakota
Delaware
Idaho
Iowa
Michigan
Mississippi
Oklahoma
Seattle
Tennessee
Wisconsin

Native Americans Contributions

Some of the visible contribution of the Native Americans have been made in the areas of arts and crafts: Navajo and Pueblo jewelry. Elements from the Native Americans weaving and bead work have been incorpo-

rated into textile design. The art crafts of Mexico and Peru and many others Latin American countries show strong Native American influences. Architecture styles in the Southwest of the United States have been influ-

enced by Pueblo style. Moccasin shoes, inspired by a pattern of Native Americans footgear, are worn by people all over the world just as kayaks and canoes are used in sports worldwide.

Inside this issue:

The Three Sisters 2
Famous Native Ameri- 2
Native Modernism 3

The Three Sisters: Corn, Beans and Squash. A gift made to the world by America.

That is the gift made to the world's food supply by the development of crops totally unknown in the Old World, the gift given to the world cuisine by knowledge of the new flavors and spices.

The Three Sisters: Corn (maize), Beans, and Squash, were the principal crops of the Native American groups in the Northeastern United States at the time the Europeans arrived here about 1600. Potatoes, sweet potatoes, manioc (also called cassava, yucca o mandioca), lima beans—these plants alone developed over the centuries by Native Americans horticulturists, increased the world supply of available protein by one third

when they were introduced to Europe, Africa and Asia.

The corn itself was regarded as a source of life so its growing cycle was carefully observed: planting, appearance of the first shoots, formation of the ears or harvesting became occasion for ceremonials celebrated in song and dance. Corn figured prominently in the myths and legends of many Native Americans tribes. Corn saved the first group of pilgrims from starvation when a Native American showed them to cultivate and harvest corn. This gave birth to an American tradition: Thanksgiving. Native Americans also cultivated others such as tomatoes, chili

peppers, and the so-called wild rice (not really rice at all) which added color and variety to world food supply. Then there were chocolate, vanilla, tapioca and pineapples. Let's not forget such popular items as chewing gum and cola drinks are derived from Native American products. Development of farming brought about the development of 'permanent' villages linked to the fields. It's important to remember that this plants were not just growing wild in America, waiting for the Europeans to come along and discover them. They had been carefully and skillfully developed by people who had a real gift for horticulture.



This diorama depicts Iroquois women in Upstate New York about 1600. The plants and animals displayed are accurate replications of those that inhabited the Iroquois world. New York State Museum current exhibit.

Famous Native Americans

*Let the Red men unite in
claiming a common and equal
right in the land, as it was at
first, and should be, for it...
belongs to all of us.*

Tecumseh, Shawnee Chief

*"Once, only Indians lived in this land. Then came
strangers from across the Great Water. No land had they;
we gave them of our land. No food had they, we gave them
our corn."*

Hiamovi, Chief of the Cheyenne

The Creation of National American Indian & Alaska Native Heritage Month

Source: Department of the Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs

What began as the turn of the century as an effort to gain a day of recognition for the significant contributions the First American made to the establishment and growth of the United States has resulted in the month of November being designated for that purpose.

One of the early proponents of an American Indian Day was Dr. Arthur C. Parker, a Seneca Indian who was the Director of the Museum of Arts and Science in Rochester, New York. He persuaded the Boy Scouts of America to set aside a day for the "First Americans", and for three years the Scouts adopted such a day. In 1915, at the Annual Congress of the American Indian Association meeting in Lawrence, Kansas, a plan celebrating American Indian Day was formally approved. The year before this proclamation was issued a Red Fox James, a Blackfeet Indian, rode horseback from state to state, seeking approval for a day to honor American Indians. On December 14, 1915, Red Fox James presented the endorsement of 24 state governments to the White House.

There is no record, however, of such a national day being proclaimed. The first American Indian Day to be celebrated in a state was declared on the second Saturday in May 1916 by the governor of New York. Several states celebrate the fourth Friday in September. In Illinois was enacted in 1919. Presently several states have designated Columbus Day as Native American Day, but it continues to be a day we observe without any legal recognition as a national holiday.

Heritage Months. In 1990 President George H.W. Bush approved a joint resolution designating November 1990 as National American Heritage Month". Similar proclamations have been issued each year since 1994.

National American Indian and Alaska Native Heritage Month, is celebrated to recognize the intertribal cultures and to educate the public about heritage, history, art, and traditions of the

Native Modernism: The Art of George Morrison and Allan Houser

Opening September 21, 2004
NMAI on the National Mall, Washington, DC

Native Modernism explores the work of George Morrison and Allan Houser, the most prominent U.S. artists of a formative generation in Native American art. Working from the mid-1930s to the late 1990s, each rebelled against ideas of what Native art must look like to evolve a personal and original style.

George Morrison was a painter of color and light. As he traveled from his birthplace in Minnesota to New York and beyond, his evolving interest in Euro-American art resulted in an individualistic and vibrantly colorful form of abstract expressionism.

Allan Houser is best known as a sculptor, and his sphere of success and influence was in the Southwest. Blending Native subject matter with a sleek modernist aesthetic, his elegant and refined art represents Native peoples in stone and metal with dignity and compassion.

Together, these men profoundly influenced later generations of Native artists.



Allan Houser Sculpture, National Museum of the American Indian, Washington, D.C.



Public Affairs Section
Km 4 1/2 carretera sur
Managua Nicaragua

Phone: 505 266-6010 ext 4617
Fax: 505 2663861

Please send your comments to:
managuairc@state.gov

About America: Native Americans

Information of the Web:
Department of Interior
www.doi.gov

Smithsonian Institute Native American Museum
www.nmai.si.edu
www.americanindian.si.edu

State Department
www.usinfo.state.gov/svc/history

Tribes in North America

This is a short list of the almost 200 tribes that occupied the area that now comprises the United States of America:

Apache: a tribe of fierce, wandering Indians living in the of North Mexico and the Southeastern United States. The name "Apache" which means enemy was given to them by the Pueblo Indians, because of their rivalries and fierce attacks that destroyed many Pueblo villages.

Cherokee: an advanced and settle tribe of Iroquoian Indians who occupied a large area of the southern United States. They had developed a political organization and government system and had agricultural skills. They raised many crops, including corn, beans, melon and tobacco.

Delaware: a highly organized tribe of

Algonquians Indians who lived in the Delaware River valley in the northern part of the U.S. The Delaware had an advanced culture and were at one time the most powerful of all the Algonquian tribes. They lived in small villages with rectangular houses made of wooden poles covered with bark. They had a highly systematized religion, which recognized one great power over the universe and four lesser gods. Four was a sacred number in many Indian cultures.

Iroquois: an alliance of a number of Indian tribes in the New York area. The Iroquois had a genius for organization. Their League of Five Nations, consisted of Five Indian Tribes was formed to establish mutual peace, to promote unity and strength against their enemies and to improve their own living and moral conditions. Women

had an important voice in tribal councils, and a mother could even forbid her son to go to war. They lived in large community houses called longhouses, several families lived in each longhouse. The Iroquois lived by hunting and fishing, and also by a highly developed agriculture. The women cared for the orchards and gardens while the man were hunting or making war.

Sioux: A union of Siouan Tribes that lived in the north-central part of the U.S. The Sioux were handsome in their fringed shirts, robes and feathers, they ornamented the manes and tail of their horses with feathers. They were great buffalo hunters. They lived in teepees so they could move about quickly. The famous calumet or peace pipe was introduced by the Sioux. It was used in prayers, solemn ceremonies, treaty-making and other occasions as pledge of peace and friendship. The Sioux and other Plain tribes communicated by means of smoke signals, fire signals and other that could be seen miles away.

Did you know?

When Europeans arrived in America they found a diversity of cultures and languages, and a variety of social organizations and levels of development much greater than what they had left behind in Europe. Most of the groups simply referred to themselves as "people". The varied names for which they were called was usually the way its neighbors, or even their enemies called them, often derogatory. One of the most famous Native American groups in the United States, the Sioux, spoke three different dialects of the same language. Each of the three groups speaking these dialects had a name for itself—Dakota, Lakota and Nakota—each of these names was that dialect's word for allies. So the Sioux identified themselves as allies of one another. The Ojibwas were the traditional rivals of the Sioux and called them "adders" (snakes) their insulted terms for "enemy". The French were the first Europeans to make contact with the Sioux. They asked Ojibwas tribesmen the name of their neighbors and since then the "Allies" have been known as the "Enemies: Sioux" by Europeans and their descendants.